



Baker Library, Harvard University; Library of Congress

foods included dried beans; game, such as bison, deer, elk, antelope, and wild fowl; and preserved meats such as bacon, salt pork, and *jerky*, or dried meat. Cattlemen could always eat beef, and sheep raisers had mutton. Frontiersmen rarely ate fresh fruit and vegetables or dairy products. Even cowboys did not milk cows.

People on the frontier had no need for fancy cooking—the men were too busy, and women were scarce. Meat with biscuits or flapjacks provided a feast. Old Len Martin of Carson City, Nev., declared while stewing a chicken that there was no sense “picking a chicken too darned close—anybody that don’t like the feathers can skim ‘em off.”

**Clothing** had to be practical, and most men wore the same plain garments day after day. They wore cowhide boots; *levis*, or blue jeans; a wool shirt; a jacket or vest; and a felt hat. Some had socks. A man often wore a red bandanna handkerchief around his neck to protect himself from the dust and cold. Women wore sunbonnets and simple calico and gingham dresses. Cowboys wore leather *chaps* to protect their legs from brush. Cowboy hats, called *sombreros*, had a wide brim to shield the eyes, and a deep crown so that the hat would not blow off. Some men bought deerskin clothes from the Indians. Wealthy men and women bought clothes from New York City, London, or Paris.

Many frontiersmen, particularly outlaws and law-enforcement officers, carried weapons. Especially popular were Winchester rifles; Colt revolvers, including the famous six-shooter; and bowie knives (see **REVOLVER** [picture]; **BOWIE KNIFE**).

**Amusements** on the frontier varied with the area and the type of settler. Homesteading families on the plains met for square dances, holiday celebrations, and house-raising or corn-husking bees. Many miners and cowboys spent most of their leisure time drinking and gambling in the saloons that sprang up in every town. Dance halls called *hurdy-gurdies* attracted many people, although men often had to dance with each other, because women were scarce. Informal rodeos featured expert horsemanship and other cowboy skills (see **RODEO**). Throughout the West, people enjoyed horse races, shooting contests, and wrestling and boxing matches. In larger towns, settlers welcomed traveling dramatic groups and vaudeville shows. They applauded such famous performers as Edwin Booth, Laura Keane, and Helena Modjeska.

**Religion** came to the western frontier even before most white settlers arrived. In the early 1800’s, Catholic and Protestant missionaries such as Father Pierre De Smet and Marcus Whitman had pushed into the Far West to convert the Indians (see **DE SMET, PIERRE JEAN**; **WHITMAN, MARCUS**). But new settlements often grew up far from the missions, and people had to rely on traveling preachers called *circuit riders* to perform religious services. These men rode about constantly. When they arrived in a town, they preached sermons and conducted marriages, baptisms, and other services for people who had sometimes waited many weeks. Among farm families on the plains, circuit riders set up Sunday schools and held summer camp meetings. See **CAMP MEETING**; **CIRCUIT RIDER**.